

The background is a light blue gradient. It is decorated with several realistic water droplets of various sizes. Some droplets are at the top left, some at the bottom right, and others are scattered in the center. Each droplet has a highlight and a shadow, giving it a 3D effect.

PERCEPTION OF SELF AND OTHERS

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

AS DWAYNE AND MIGUEL LEAVE THEIR SPANISH LITERATURE CLASS ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE SEMESTER, DWAYNE COMMENTS: “I GIVE UP! THIS COURSE IS GOING TO BE IMPOSSIBLE—I DON’T WANT TO TAKE IT.”

“REALLY?” REPLIES MIGUEL. “I THOUGHT THE COURSE SOUNDED INTERESTING. THE PROFESSOR WAS FUNNY, AND I REALLY LIKED HOW WE COULD CHOOSE OUR OWN PAPER TOPIC.”

“BUT DID YOU SEE WHAT WE’RE READING?” ASKS DWAYNE. “WE’VE GOT FOUR BOOKS TO READ—WITH A TEST OVER EACH BOOK, AND THEN WE’RE SUPPOSED TO WRITE A PAPER!”

“BUT THE BOOKS LOOK PRETTY INTERESTING,” REPLIES MIGUEL. “THEY’RE NOVELS AND SOME EVEN HAVE MOVIES BASED ON THEM. AND BECAUSE THE PROFESSOR SEEMS TO KNOW WHAT HE’S TALKING ABOUT—I MEAN HE WAS BORN AND EDUCATED IN SPAIN—HE’LL PROBABLY BE ABLE TO TELL US A LOT ABOUT SPAIN.”

“RIGHT,” SAYS DWAYNE, “BUT I’M TAKING FOUR OTHER COURSES THAT LOOK PRETTY TOUGH. I LIKE SPANISH, BUT FOUR BOOKS AND A PAPER!”



THE PERCEPTION PROCESS

1. ATTENTION AND SELECTION

- **PERCEPTION IS** *THE PROCESS OF SELECTIVELY ATTENDING TO INFORMATION AND ASSIGNING MEANING TO IT.*

YOUR CHOICES OF SENSORY STIMULI DEPEND IN PART ON YOUR NEEDS, INTERESTS, AND EXPECTATIONS.

- NEEDS – BIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
 - INTERESTS
 - EXPECTATIONS
- 



THE PERCEPTION PROCESS

2. ORGANIZATION OF STIMULI

EVEN THOUGH OUR ATTENTION AND SELECTION PROCESS DOES REDUCE THE NUMBER OF STIMULI OUR BRAIN MUST PROCESS, THE NUMBER OF STIMULI WE ATTEND TO AT ANY ONE MOMENT IS STILL SUBSTANTIAL. OUR BRAINS ARRANGE THESE STIMULI SO THAT THEY MAKE SENSE ACCORDING TO ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES SUCH AS:

- SIMPLICITY
 - PATTERN
- 



THE PERCEPTION PROCESS


3. INTERPRETATION OF STIMULI

AS THE BRAIN SELECTS AND ORGANIZES THE INFORMATION IT RECEIVES FROM THE SENSES, IT ALSO **INTERPRETS** THE INFORMATION BY ASSIGNING MEANING TO IT.





PERCEPTIONS OF SELF: SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ESTEEM

- **SELF-CONCEPT** IS YOUR SELF-IDENTITY
 - **SELF-ESTEEM** IS YOUR OVERALL EVALUATION OF YOUR COMPETENCE AND PERSONAL WORTHINESS
- 

FORMING AND MAINTAINING A SELF-CONCEPT


OUR SELF-CONCEPT IS ESSENTIALLY OUR IDENTITY, THAT IS, WHO WE THINK WE REALLY ARE. WE DEVELOP OUR SELF-CONCEPT BASED ON OUR EXPERIENCES AND OTHERS' REACTIONS AND RESPONSES TO US.

- PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
- REACTIONS AND RESPONSES OF OTHERS



THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND CULTURE ON SELF-PERCEPTIONS

A PERSON'S CULTURE HAS A STRONG INFLUENCE ON THE SELF-PERCEPTION PROCESS. IN INDIVIDUALISTIC CULTURES, SUCH AS THE UNITED STATES, PEOPLE STRESS THE SELF AND PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT. IN INDIVIDUALISTIC CULTURES, PEOPLE CARE ABOUT SELF-CONCEPT, SELF-ESTEEM, AND SELF-IMAGE.





CHANGING SELF-PERCEPTIONS

SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ESTEEM ARE ENDURING CHARACTERISTICS, BUT THEY CAN BE CHANGED. AT TIMES, COMMENTS THAT CONTRADICT YOUR CURRENT SELF-PERCEPTION LEAD YOU TO SLOWLY CHANGE IT.



ACCURACY AND DISTORTION OF SELF-PERCEPTIONS

THE ACCURACY OF OUR SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ESTEEM DEPENDS ON THE ACCURACY OF OUR OWN PERCEPTIONS AND HOW WE PROCESS OTHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF US. ALL OF US EXPERIENCE SUCCESS AND FAILURE, AND ALL OF US HEAR PRAISE AND CRITICISM.

- **INCONGRUENCE**

THE GAP BETWEEN OUR INACCURATE SELF-PERCEPTIONS AND REALITY, IS A PROBLEM BECAUSE OUR PERCEPTIONS OF SELF ARE MORE LIKELY THAN OUR TRUE ABILITIES TO AFFECT OUR BEHAVIOR

- **SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY**

A FALSE PERCEPTION OF A SITUATION OR CHARACTERISTIC OR SKILL THAT LEADS TO BEHAVIORS THAT PERPETUATE THAT FALSE PERCEPTION AS TRUE.

ACCURACY AND DISTORTION OF SELF-PERCEPTIONS

- **FILTERING MESSAGES**

A SECOND WAY THAT OUR SELF-PERCEPTIONS CAN BECOME DISTORTED IS THROUGH THE WAY WE FILTER WHAT OTHERS SAY TO US. WE ARE PRONE TO PAY ATTENTION TO MESSAGES THAT REINFORCE OUR CURRENT SELF-IMAGE, WHEREAS MESSAGES THAT CONTRADICT THIS IMAGE MAY NOT “REGISTER” OR MAY BE DOWNPLAYED.

THE EFFECTS OF SELF-PERCEPTIONS ON COMMUNICATION

JUST AS OUR SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ESTEEM AFFECT HOW ACCURATELY WE PERCEIVE OURSELVES, SO TOO DO THEY INFLUENCE OUR COMMUNICATION BY MODERATING COMPETING INTERNAL MESSAGES IN OUR SELF-TALK, INFLUENCING HOW WE COMMUNICATE ABOUT OURSELVES WITH OTHERS, AND AFFECTING COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION.

- ***SELF-PERCEPTIONS MODERATE HOW WE TALK TO OURSELVES.***
- ***SELF-PERCEPTIONS INFLUENCE HOW WE TALK ABOUT OURSELVES WITH OTHERS.***
- ***SELF-PERCEPTIONS AFFECT COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION.***

PRESENTING SELF TO OTHERS

YOUR SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ESTEEM ARE THE “TRUE” PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT YOU THINK OF YOURSELF. BUT WHEN WE INTERACT WITH OTHERS, MOST OF US MASK SOME OF WHO WE REALLY THINK WE ARE SO THAT WE CAN MEET OR VIOLATE OTHERS EXPECTATIONS.

- **SELF-MONITORING** IS *THE INTERNAL PROCESS OF OBSERVING, ANALYZING, AND REGULATING YOUR OWN BEHAVIOR BASED ON YOUR ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION AND OTHERS' RESPONSES TO YOU.*
- **SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SELF:** WE PRESENT DIFFERENT PERSONAS IN RESPONSE TO DIFFERENT SITUATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS, AND WE CHANGE OURSELVES IN THE PROCESS. WE SOCIALLY CONSTRUCT OURSELVES THROUGH THE ROLES WE ENACT. A **ROLE** IS A PATTERN OF LEARNED BEHAVIORS THAT WE USE TO MEET THE PERCEIVED DEMANDS OF A PARTICULAR CONTEXT.

PERCEPTION OF OTHERS

AS WE ENCOUNTER NEW PEOPLE, OR AS WE EXPERIENCE NEW SITUATIONS IN OUR ONGOING RELATIONSHIPS, MOST OF US FEEL SOMEWHAT TO PROFOUNDLY ANXIOUS. THIS PROCESS OF MONITORING THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SELF AND OTHERS IS CALLED **UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION** (LITTLEJOHN & FOSS, 2007). AS PEOPLE INTERACT, THEY GAIN INFORMATION AND FORM IMPRESSIONS OF OTHERS.

- **OBSERVING OTHERS** - OUR INITIAL SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS OR FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF OTHERS ARE USUALLY MADE FROM OUR OBSERVATIONS OF HOW THEY LOOK AND ACT. WE OFTEN JUDGE PEOPLE TO BE FRIENDLY, INTELLIGENT, OR “COOL” BASED ON HOW PHYSICALLY ATTRACTIVE WE FIND THEM (ARONSON, 1999, P. 380).

OBSERVING OTHERS

- **IMPLICIT PERSONALITY THEORIES** – *ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT WHICH PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS AND PERSONALITY TRAITS OR BEHAVIORS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH ONE ANOTHER.*
- **HALO EFFECT** *TO GENERALIZE AND PERCEIVE THAT A PERSON HAS A WHOLE SET OF CHARACTERISTICS WHEN YOU HAVE ACTUALLY OBSERVED ONLY ONE CHARACTERISTIC, TRAIT, OR BEHAVIOR.*

USING STEREOTYPES

A **STEREOTYPE** IS “A GENERALIZATION, USUALLY EXAGGERATED OR OVERSIMPLIFIED AND OFTEN OFFENSIVE, USED TO DESCRIBE OR DISTINGUISH A GROUP”

- **PREJUDICE** *A RIGID ATTITUDE THAT IS BASED ON GROUP MEMBERSHIP AND PREDISPOSES AN INDIVIDUAL TO FEEL, THINK, OR ACT IN A NEGATIVE WAY TOWARD ANOTHER PERSON OR GROUP.*
- **DISCRIMINATION** *A NEGATIVE ACTION TOWARD A SOCIAL GROUP OR ITS MEMBERS ON ACCOUNT OF GROUP MEMBERSHIP.*

EMOTIONAL STATE

A FINAL FACTOR THAT AFFECTS HOW ACCURATELY WE PERCEIVE OTHERS IS OUR EMOTIONAL STATE AT THE TIME OF THE INTERACTION (FORGAS, 1991).

OUR EMOTIONAL STATE ALSO AFFECTS OUR ATTRIBUTIONS (FORGAS, 2000). **ATTRIBUTIONS** ARE REASONS WE GIVE FOR OTHERS' BEHAVIOR (HEIDER, 1958). ACCORDING TO ATTRIBUTION THEORY, WHAT WE DETERMINE—RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY—TO BE THE CAUSES OF OTHERS' BEHAVIOR HAS A DIRECT IMPACT ON OUR PERCEPTIONS OF THEM.

PERCEIVING OTHERS' MESSAGES

OUR OBSERVATIONS OF OTHERS AND OUR EMOTIONAL STATE CERTAINLY AFFECT HOW WE PERCEIVE OTHERS. NOT ONLY THAT, THEY ALSO TEND TO INFLUENCE HOW WE PERCEIVE THE MESSAGES OTHERS SEND TO US. TWO ADDITIONAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE HOW WE PERCEIVE OTHERS' MESSAGES ARE

- *CONTEXT*
- *SHARED LANGUAGE*

IMPROVING THE ACCURACY OF SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS

THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES CAN AID YOU IN CONSTRUCTING ACCURATE IMPRESSIONS OF OTHERS AND IN ASSESSING YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF OTHERS' MESSAGES.

- 1. QUESTION THE ACCURACY OF YOUR PERCEPTIONS.**
- 2. SEEK MORE INFORMATION TO VERIFY PERCEPTIONS.**
- 3. REALIZE THAT YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF A PERSON WILL CHANGE OVER TIME.**
- 4. USE THE SKILL OF PERCEPTION CHECKING.**

For each of the following situations, write a well-based perception check.

When Franco comes home from the doctor's office, you notice that he looks pale and his shoulders are slumped. Glancing at you with a sad look, he shrugs his shoulders.

You say:

As you return the basketball you borrowed from Liam, you smile and say, "Thanks, here's your ball." You notice Liam stiffen, grab the ball, and, turning abruptly, walk away.

You say:

Natalie, who has been waiting to hear about a scholarship, dances into the room with a huge grin on her face.

You say:

4. You see your adviser in the hall and ask her if she can meet with you on Wednesday afternoon to discuss your schedule of classes for next term. You notice that she pauses, frowns, sighs, turns slowly, and says, "I guess so."

You say:

Compare your written responses to the guidelines for effective perception checking discussed earlier. Edit your responses where necessary to improve them. Now say them aloud. Do they sound "natural"? If not, revise them until they do.



Skill Learning Activity 2.6